

Thank you very much for this opportunity to respond to the Certificate of Need (CON) filed by NSP regarding building high voltage transmission lines in my neighborhoods. I applaud this very considerate process of review prior to making policy decisions that have wide and long-term implications for public health and wellbeing.

As someone who took the time and study necessary to participate in the earlier powerline siting hearings, **I urge that all of our submitted testimony in that process of siting the powerlines also be included in these current deliberations.** Much of it is pertinent to the CON, as well.

In this document, I will be critiquing the claims made in the CON. I will additionally be proposing a bold alternative that will:

1. Promote health and economic well-being in my neighborhoods and beyond,
2. Save NSP/Xcel, taxpayers and ratepayers money,
3. Enable NSP/Xcel to meet government regulations for sustainable power generation, and
3. Provide a model to others of a sustainable 21<sup>st</sup> Century means of meeting energy needs.

Unlike the powerline CON, my model addresses the crucial issue of power generation as well as transmission. I argue that, despite public claims to the contrary, building these powerlines assumes increased electricity generation. Surely additional electricity generation will be necessary to supply the 120 MW projected to be carried by the line. The energy projected amounts to 11% of the Prairie Island plant's production – just for a very small area. The CON completely ignores the huge cost and pollution implications of additional electricity generation. Policy makers responsible for the common good cannot afford to take this blinkered view of the larger issues.

On a personal level, I have lived in the Phillips/Powderhorn neighborhoods (in 3 dwellings) since 1981. While my current home is three blocks south of the Greenway, my church, Our Saviour's Lutheran where I work and worship, is four blocks north of the recommended route, underground on 28<sup>th</sup> street. Currently, I spend most of 24/7 within the immediate area of the proposed high voltage lines.

Influencing my testimony are several poignant life experiences:

1. My elderly and fragile mother both had a nearly fatal health emergency during one “bad air” period, and then died unexpectedly during a different bad air period (The particulates most likely came from coal burned for electricity). Given her fragile health, no one can say to what extent the particulates shortened her life. Health-challenged people do die disproportionately during “bad air” periods.

2. Our 100 year old house suffered the “fluke” of a pipe freeze and burst during a recent extreme weather event. The rebuild of the house cost my insurance company hundreds of thousands of dollars. We invested additional dollars to improve insulation and energy conservation. Now the house is much more comfortable and cheaper to run.

3. In my own 57 years, I have witnessed climate change and impacts of pollution, including disturbing epidemiological health declines. Something is changing the health/genetics of our offspring. I am convinced that we cannot afford to continue the 20<sup>th</sup> century attitude that there are no consequences to pollution, including that caused by fuel extraction and energy production.

**Critique of CON.** For purposes of my argument I will abbreviate “the CON application to build two 115 KV high voltage transmission lines in the Midtown Area of South Minneapolis, Hennepin County – Hiawatha” to BuildMore. I will term my proposal SustainMore.

1. **Projected need:** As many have stated in prior testimony, the electricity consumption projections assumes rapid growth in electricity usage unchecked by rising fuel prices, peak oil, recession/unemployment, government regulations related to pollution, and increased efficiencies.

2. **Inaccurate comparisons of cost:** In dismissing conservation, wind, and solar, as too expensive, the CON fails to note that the cost of BuildMore is only for the TRANSMISSION of energy. The dismissed alternatives also cover the cost of generation. This conventional fuel cost -- and the resulting benefits of alternatives -- is expected to rise exponentially given current expectations. That dollar differential should be included in the comparison.

3. **Failure to include the negative impacts of BuildMore on an already challenged neighborhood and population.** To it’s credit, the BuildMore CON notes: “The Hiawatha Project is Xcel Energy’s first high voltage transmission project in

some time to be proposed in an urban area in Minnesota with as high a population density (about 8,000 people per square mile) as the Project Area and consequently presents numerous unique challenges and considerations. Among these challenges is the significant built-up infrastructure in the immediate area, including multi-family housing and businesses, which limits the space available to add infrastructure, such as the proposed transmission lines.” The disruption and negative impact on commerce of construction; the destruction of current community assets; and the negative health impacts (real or assumed) on property values, investment decisions, and citizen anxiety fall disproportionately on already disadvantaged communities. The BUildMore CON needs to demonstrate how this is not in violation of the law which prohibits further disadvantaging already disadvantaged communities.

**4. The CON fails to include the significant negative health and welfare impacts of the fuel extraction and energy generation needed to provide 120 MW of additional load.** We citizens ask those policy makers to engage in a cost-benefit analysis in terms of the likely future consequences of the actions proposed in the big picture – not just the relatively small frame of a powerline. Remember that you will be looking back on the situation in the future and asking yourself whether you did the right thing. BuildMore continues to assume a world of ever-increasing power supply, regardless of increased international demand for increasingly problematic to obtain toxic fuels. BuildMore also assumes the 20<sup>th</sup> century model of pollution with impunity, and few public restrictions.

**5. BuildMore requires significant amounts of upfront financing,** regardless of what ultimate demand turns out to be. Ratepayers are coerced into paying the costs of this financing whether it proves to be necessary or not.

### **Alternative Proposal -- SustainMore**

In contrast, I propose the SustainMore project, a bold opportunity to utilize the unique assets of our neighborhoods to forge a 21<sup>st</sup> Century model of smart grid urban energy planning. The project would use the strong community and block organizations and the significant labor pool in our neighborhoods to craft reduced use and conservation. The aging but well-constructed housing stock would be selectively identified for rehab

and solar and/or wind power generation, adding value to declining properties and stability to the residents.

Already, partnerships are being forged to address these issues, such as the Lake Street Council. Large energy users, such as the hospitals, Wells Fargo, and the Midtown Exchange are already interested and active in reducing their energy use and costs (now and in the future) and being good neighborhood partners.

Imagine the vision of blocks of houses with south-facing solar power generating roofs!

Economies of scale and improving technologies will reduce the costs, now and in the future.

A title of a recent Bloomberg news article **“Solar Power May Already Rival Coal, Prompting Installation Surge”** (By Ehren Goossens - Apr 5, 2011 9:00 PM PT)

also indicates that in addition to saving on the costs of BuildMore, the electricity generation itself by solar means will be as cheap as coal is now. We know that our area has better solar exposure than Germany which has attained considerable solar generation.. For instance, average annual solar radiation per day is 4.74kWhrs/sq meter here while in Berlin it is 2.96. (See

<http://rredc.nrel.gov/solar/calculators/PVWATTS/version1/> New models of joint ownership/responsibility can be developed to safeguard the interests of the utility and the property owner in this decentralized generation scenario.

The utility will be able to build incrementally according to real need instead of risking over-building. The utility will not need to borrow as much money because the construction will take place over time, generating income (power) , as it is constructed. Instead of committing funds, disruption, and effort to 120 MW, the project can grow according to actual need.

Attaining better citizen participation in conservation efforts requires significant incentives and the person-to-person approach that explains what is truly at stake. The Mothers of Tokyo are re-thinking the decisions made by their officials now that they know that their children's water has been rendered unsafe. I have not been impressed by Xcel's efforts to promote conservation; I personally have not found Xcel's conservation incentives worth my participation. I have received conflicting answers to my questions about load shifting – when it would least demanding on the grid system for me to use electricity. Surely, this information should be readily available.

A joint citizen/Xcel effort in our area could produce a significant jump in Xcel's reaching the legislative mandates for renewables in their overall generation portfolio. Imagine the positive press and international interest in this project!

Yesterday (April 4), we learned that radiation from Fukushima was in our rain. It is a little thing, but now I must evaluate whether the spinach that I husbanded through the winter may no longer be the healthy gift to my family that I had planned.

Officially, we are told that the amount of radiation is of no concern—yet. My friends who are cancer survivors have been given other instructions about their exposure to radiation. So far, I have not had cancer, but my chances as a woman are one in three, and increasing. My husband's likelihood is 50 %. How will those statistics worsen in the aftermath of increasing pollution?

I have been told that burying the powerline does not provide significant protection from electromagnetic pollution.

The mothers of Tokyo have been told not to give their children the now-radiated water. They are learning that someone traded off the health of their children (and potentially that of the rest of us around the globe) by creating toxic chemicals for the short-term boiling of water for electricity. Many of those toxic chemicals remain toxic for thousands of years. There were significant decisions made to create short-term energy without due concern for potential consequences.

We know better now. We must turn to sustainable practices in every decision, especially in this powerline decision. If the incentives promote profits through pollution, we must change the incentives.

We have a true opportunity to light the way for a sustainable future. We should choose to promote the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these comments.

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